

RONGORONGO AND THE ROCK ART OF EASTER ISLAND

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Of all the mysteries about Easter Island, none is as unresolved or as controversial as *rongorongo*, the enigmatic script first reported in the latter half of the 19th century. A lot of ink has been spilled about Easter Island's *rongorongo* – and no shortage of vitriol, too. If you thought disagreements over Heyerdahl's defunct diffusionist theories took a hyperbolic course, then you haven't done your *rongorongo* homework.

Others *have* done their homework, however. Steven Fischer's *Rongorongo: The Easter Island Script* (Clarendon, 1997) represents the most complete compilation to date of information on the subject, including history and tracings of all the *rongorongo* artifacts known to the scholarly world. And Alan Drake's four-part "Layman's Guide to *Rongorongo*" (*Rapa Nui Journal*, 1988-90) presents the subject in concise, approachable terms.

Neither of these, nor virtually any of the other common works on *rongorongo*, have devoted much space to the inscriptions or artifacts as art forms in their own right. The purpose of this paper is, therefore, to point out some similarities between Easter Island rock art and *rongorongo* in order to better appreciate the creative spectrum of the Rapanui people.

RONGORONGO ARTIFACTS DEFINED

For the reader unfamiliar with the subject (or who needs a refresher), *rongorongo* is the abbreviated Polynesian word used to describe a script created by the Rapanui consisting of some 120 symbols – including celestial objects, geometric forms, plants, and animals (the most common of which is the *manutara* bird). The script is etched onto wood tablets and other objects with the use of obsidian flakes or shark teeth. Most of the *rongorongo* artifacts known are wood boards about 12 to 20 inches [30 to 50 cm] long and made from the wood of Toromiro (*Sophora toromiro*) or Mako'i (*Thespesia populnea*) – two trees that the islanders had access to in the past. Others artifacts are made from what appears to be driftwood, and one artifact was even made from a ship's oar.¹

The 120 basic elements of the script can be combined to form between 1,500 and 2,000 compound signs. The full name for *rongorongo* is *kohau motu mo rongorongo* (or *maori ko hau rongorongo*)² and means "lines of inscriptions for recitation", indicating a ritual purpose. The script is not an alphabet but more like "cue cards" for whole words or ideas, though more recently two linguists – Konstantin Pozdniakov in France and Martha Macri in the U.S. – have published articles suggesting that *rongorongo* may be more fully phonetic than anyone else has recognized.

As to exactly what *rongorongo* was, what it served, and how it was used is open to a lot of speculation. Fischer argues persuasively that surviving *rongorongo* tablets are religious chants, in the form of pictograms, elaborating a series of copulatory creation myths. This equates well with the frequency with which birds, fish, plants, and human-like figures

appear in the *rongorongo* texts. Theories aside, we do know that the tablets were read in a fashion known as "reverse boustrophedon" – that is, starting from the left-hand bottom corner, proceeding from left to right, and, at the end of the line, the tablet is turned around to start reading the next line (the orientation of the hieroglyphs being reversed every other line). We also know that the texts were recited in a singing or chanting voice. And we know that the incised tablets and other objects were accessible only to a small number of socially prominent men. The scripts may also have recorded hymns in honor of *Makemake* (the Easter Island supreme deity) or other deities; listed crimes or other deeds of individuals; or commemorated those fallen in war or other conflicts.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF RONGORONGO

Rongorongo tablets and their inscriptions were first described to the outside world by missionary Eugène Eyraud in 1864.³ Writing to the Congregation of the Sacred Hearts in Paris, Eyraud described "wooden tablets or staffs covered with sorts of hieroglyphic characters". He said they were "in all the houses". Though Eyraud's reports were published on two separate occasions in 1866, little attention was paid to the subject. Eyraud ironically contributed to the dearth of information. When three Catholic missionaries arrived on the island in 1866 (Hippolyte Roussel, Gaspar Zumbohm, and Théodule Esocolan), Eyraud never showed them the tablets or even mentioned their existence to his Catholic brethren.

However, in 1869, Zumbohm paid a visit to Bishop Étienne "Tepano" Jaussen in Tahiti and brought with him a gift from the Rapanui people of a *rongorongo* tablet wrapped with a skein of human hair 52-feet (16 m) long. This piqued Jaussen's curiosity and he instructed Zumbohm to find everything he could on the mysterious tablets and script. By this time, however, most of the *rongorongo* artifacts had been destroyed. Thus began nearly 140 years of the search for and research on the mysterious *rongorongo*.

But if Eyraud's reports about the number of tablets were accurate, what had happened to them? Despite some single-minded and largely unsubstantiated claims that missionaries forced the islanders to burn the tablets or that they were all used for fuel, it's more likely that multiple factors were responsible. On an island devoid of trees, the tablets *would* have been useful as fuel. On an island where Christianity had supplanted the original Polynesian beliefs, the tablets may well have lost their ritual importance. (In 1877, Alphonse Pinart, a passenger on the ship *Seignelay*, visited Rapa Nui and reported tablets being used as cores for rolling up fishing nets.) Given the fervor with which the missionaries converted the islanders, it does not take a great leap of imagination to envision islanders either being forced to destroy the tablets or wanting to do so as a way of supplication to their new-found religion. But, together with other factors – such as clan warfare, slave raids, and even concealment – it's not surprising

the few remaining artifacts might essentially disappear.

Artifacts with *rongorongo* inscriptions did materialize from time to time, however. In 1870 Captain Gana of the Chilean ship *O'Higgins* obtained three *rongorongo* artifacts, one of which was subsequently lost. Two years later Admiral de Lapelin of the French ship *La Flore*, also managed to obtain *rongorongo* artifacts. These are but a few of what would be the remaining 25 known authentic artifacts incised with *rongorongo* glyphs that exist today. Ironically, Easter Island itself no longer possesses a single authentic *rongorongo* tablet.⁴ Around the world – in places like Rome, Paris, London, New York, Washington, Hawai'i, Chile, St. Petersburg, Tahiti, Berlin, and Vienna – there are 19 tablets (or fragments of tablets) 4 other objects with incised script, 1 walking stick or staff, and 1 artifact in a private collection. These 25 artifacts contain over 14,000 glyphs.

One of the first attempts to translate the inscriptions occurred after Eyraud's death in 1868. A monsignor located a man named Metoro Taouaouré, who claimed to be able to read the tablets. Starting from the bottom left-hand corner, and reading left to right, Metoro started chanting. At the end of the line he turned the tablet around and began the next line. The monsignor tried to write down Metoro's reading of four tablets in his possession but was soon disappointed because Metoro's chanting made little sense (e.g., "He is pierced. It is the king. He went to the water. The man is sleeping against blossoming fruit. The posts are set up"). As Fischer has noted, much of Metoro's vocabulary of his "chants" wasn't even in Rapanui but Tahitian.

The European scholarly world first learned of the existence of *rongorongo* in 1870 when Rodolfo Philippi, Director of the Museo Nacional in Santiago, described two tablets given to him by Captain Gana (or possibly Captain Goñi) of the *O'Higgins* expedition. Within a year, Russian scholar and scientist Nikolai Miklukho-Maklai undertook the first scientific description of the inscriptions. This was followed in 1872 by a French writing systems' specialist, Prévost de Longpérier, who applied some of the first epigraphical efforts towards decipherment.

Thomas Croft, an American in Tahiti, gives a detailed report of his attempt to translate the glyphs based on his visit starting in 1873. After the first attempt, Croft lost his notes, so he had the interpreter repeat what he'd said. Thereafter, Croft found his lost notes but discovered they were completely different from the second translation, even though both translations were derived from the same *rongorongo* tablet. A third attempt, using the same tablet, resulted in a third and again completely different account. Fischer has observed that Croft probably didn't fully understand the nature of recitation of the script and was no doubt applying a Western interpretation, which caused him to dismiss the results without closer scrutiny. Also in 1873, London amateur epigrapher James Harrison, using plaster casts of two Santiago tablets, presented a lecture on the "Hieroglyphs of Easter Island" at the Royal Anthropological Institute. The not entirely successful lecture (or decipherment, for that matter) was nevertheless the first major non-informant attempt to translate *rongorongo*.

In 1882 Captain-Lieutenant William Geiseler of the

German Navy's *Hyäne* reported (based on the assistance of Alexander Salmon) that two artifacts still survived, both of which were available but only for a very high price). He was also told that there were two purposes for the script: To send short, secret messages between chiefs; and to create genealogical lists.

Four years later Paymaster William Thomson of the U.S.S. *Mohican* managed to obtain two tablets. He reports that islanders claimed to have destroyed the tablets because of pressure from missionaries – and that Hotu Matu'a was said to have brought 67 tablets with him when he settled the island. Recounted in her book *Mystery of Easter Island*, Katherine Routledge relates an interesting if sad and frustrating story based on the records of Thomson: There was an old man named Daniel Ure Va'e Iko, who was said to be the last to understand the *rongorongo* script. He at first refused to assist in deciphering the script because his religious teachers told him it would imperil his soul. With the aid of "stimulants" (Routledge's word) and showing Ure Va'e Iko photographs (he wouldn't touch the real *rongorongo* tablets), he spoke and his words were recorded. Inexplicably, he seemed to say the same thing even when viewing different photographs, which suggested that he was using the tablets as a mnemonic device rather than actually reciting what was written on them.

Routledge herself, in 1914, reported that only a handful of the surviving Rapanui had actually witnessed the reading of *rongorongo* as children and thus had no personal knowledge of the script. She was also told that the original glyphs were written on banana leaves but later they switched to the longer-lasting wood; banana leaves were still used by novices to practice before moving up to harder, more precious, surfaces. Routledge was the last properly trained observer to gather first-hand information from Rapanui who had been adults during the slave raids.

In stark contrast, J. MacMillan Brown (in 1922) and Stephen Chauvet (in 1930) presented speculative, unscientific contributions to the study of *rongorongo* – the former emphasizing "lost continent" theories and claiming that the Rapanui had never been capable, either physically or socially, of erecting the island's stonework; the latter a dilettante who is best remembered for the extent of his collecting and collections of Easter Island artifacts than his contribution to ethnography or archaeology.

In 1932 controversy erupted over the origin of the script. Hungarian Guillaume de Hevesy presented a wild theory equating *rongorongo* with the Indus Valley script. He concluded that, while they were not identical, they must have derived from an older parent script. Yes, there are similarities between the two in some respects (Figure 1), as one might expect given the human appreciation for and expression in symbolism – but de Hevesy's theory failed to take into account the distances in space (13,000 miles/20,000 kilometers) and time (at least 4,000 years), to say nothing of how unlikely it would be that the script would have survived the dangers of flood and field during such a migration, and still remained unchanged. Or to have left no trace of itself across the Pacific? Comparable attempts at comparisons occurred in 1938 when Robert von Heine-Geldern, an Austrian scholar,

described similarities among *rongorongo*, Indus Valley script, and bone and shell inscriptions from ancient China. It should come as no surprise that Heine-Geldern was a defender of diffusionist theories.)

By 1934, when Alfred Métraux arrived on the island as part of the Franco-Belgian Expedition, no artifacts were to be found – despite offers of 1,000 pesos for a genuine specimen. (This would be worth over \$1,300 today!) This was also the year Werner Wolff sought to prove a similarity between ancient Egyptian hieroglyphs and the Easter Island script. (Among other hypotheses, Wolff thought *moai* were “transported” to their *ahu* by being blown out of what he thought would have active volcanoes on the island!)

The year 1935 marks the arrival of Sebastián Englert, the Capuchin priest who, despite his devotion to the people, the language, and the island’s past, bungled many details of *rongorongo* scholarship – concluding, oddly enough, that it simply wasn’t very important. He arrived at this conclusion by asserting that too few tablets existed (which was probably true), the understanding of the Rapanui language was insufficient to provide a viable means of decipherment (which was unduly pessimistic), and that it was improbable the tablets contained useful information about the island’s past (which would be impossible to determine until or unless tablets turned up and were deciphered in the first place).

This didn’t stop science and speculation, however. In 1938, Peter Buck first suggested *rongorongo* was not a script at all but merely a pictorial system (a theory that since been rejected) and, in 1955, Thor Heyerdahl arrived on the scene with his Norwegian expedition. Discovery and evaluation of *rongorongo* was not on the agenda at that time, but subsequent investigations of *rongorongo* by Heyerdahl focused, not too surprisingly, on substantiation of his theory of South American connections to Easter Island. Kenneth Emory also chimed in, in 1968, mostly to challenge Heyerdahl’s theories.

The 1950s saw some serious improvements in the scholarship of *rongorongo*, including the work of Nikolai Butinov, a Russian who was the first to apply scientific

methodology in print that could give rise to decipherment. And, aside from Stephen Fischer, probably no one has made such significant contributions to the study of *rongorongo* than Thomas Barthel. Beginning in 1953 and continuing for at least 40 years, he developed the first convincing vestiges of true decipherment, including a lunar calendar that comprises part of the “Mamari” tablet.

And yet, despite all this, after nearly a century-and-a-half of collection and evaluation, a complete translation of *rongorongo* has eluded us.

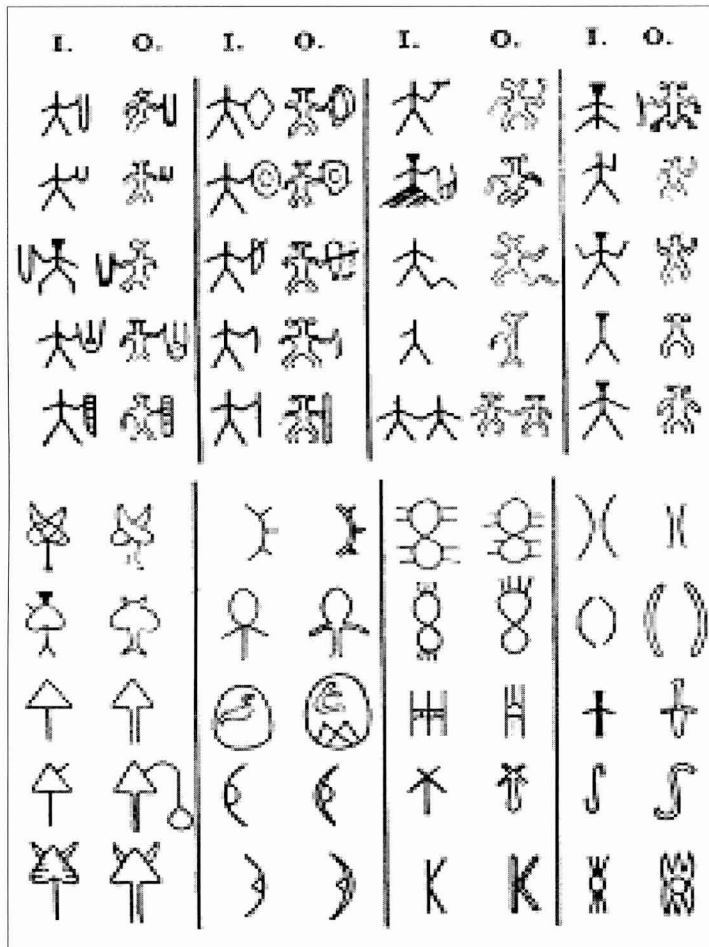


Figure 1. First page of de Hevesy’s “proof” of a link between Indus Valley and Easter Island scripts. I = Indus Valley, O = Easter Island. [de Hevesy, 1934; cited in Fischer, 1997].

RONGORONGO AS AN ART FORM

Although much scholarship has been devoted to the *meaning* of *rongorongo*, far less has been devoted to its function as an artistic expression. On Easter Island the *moai* and *ahu* get most of the press, with the rock art sometimes underappreciated (especially since it’s not always evident or is lost in the high grass or trampled by livestock). And yet, when it and other Easter Island art forms are discussed, there still tends to be a preoccupation with meanings that can be interpreted (e.g., are *moai kavakava* spirits of death or representations inspired by periods of starvation on the island?) or methods employed (e.g., tools, pigments, intaglio vs. bas relief, etc.). Thus I was inspired to examine *rongorongo* in the context of Easter Island rock art – and it is here that I most assuredly agree with Fischer when he says *rongorongo* is

first and foremost an art form and only secondarily a script. This is not a new idea. The French Impressionist Paul Gauguin incorporated *rongorongo* glyphs in three of his works – a painting entitled “Merahi Metua no Tehamana” (“Parental Angels of Tehamana”) in 1893, a woodcut (“The Crucifixion”) in 1897, and a wood sculpture (also known as “The Crucifixion”) a year or so later. Nor does it require any advanced scholarship to recognize a concordance between the *rongorongo* and Easter Island rock art, even though some would say otherwise.

As far back as 1972, Emory expressed his doubts: “There is a very great gap”, he wrote, “between the pictures

and symbols which appear among the paintings, carvings, tattoos, and petroglyphs of the Easter Islanders...and this script". However, as Lee (1992) has pointed out, Emory based his early conclusions on an inadequate appreciation of Easter Island rock art itself. (In a like manner, Heyerdahl concluded in 1955 that there was little left to discover in Easter Island petroglyphs, even though at the time perhaps only 30% of island rock art had been catalogued.) By contrast, Métraux, concluded "...the petroglyphs..., in style and subject-matter, are related to the 'hieroglyphs' and testify to the existence on the island of a graphic art that reached its highest level on the tablets". Since these early days of Easter Island investigations, we have developed a more complete appreciation of the island's rock art (thanks mostly to Lee) and thus it is easier to see parallels between the rock art and *rongorongo*.

But there is at least one hurdle with which we must contend before we proceed, and it depends on how we define our terms. Is *rongorongo* defined by its attributes as *inscriptions* or as *individual glyphs*? Referring to Barthel, Fischer (1997) defines "inscription" as "a sequence of two or more glyphs that have been incised for a proven or assumed non-ornamental purpose". By this reckoning, Fischer as well as Flenley & Bahn (1992) and Bahn & Flenley (2002) conclude *rongorongo* proper does not exist in Easter Island rock art (i.e., there are no *inscriptions* to be found). But does this restrictive definition do us much good? If we are comparing art forms to art forms, does it matter if the manifestation of the art appears singularly or as part of a sequence?⁵

Moreover, if we turn to another venerable source (the Oxford English Dictionary), we see that an inscription can be "a letter, word, sentence, etc., that is inscribed on stone, metal, paper, etc., esp. so as to be conspicuous or durable". I do not think it is too much of a stretch to conclude this alternate definition is equally applicable to *rongorongo* as well as Easter Island rock art. As Lee has said, "it would make sense that imagery carries through a society and what you see in the portable objects reflects what is on the rocks themselves, and/or tattooed on bodies" (personal communication, 2004).

Indeed, in keeping with this variant definition, Fischer (1997) himself acknowledges some *rongorongo* glyphs that match petroglyphs on the island: *rei miro* (pectoral orna-

ment; glyph 7), *komari* (vulva symbol; glyph 51), *tangata manu* (Birdman; glyph 638), glyph 108), and *rapa* (dance paddle; unnumbered glyph). The Spanish "treaty" of 1770 also features *rongorongo* "signatures" with at least two distinct, petroglyph-like depictions (*komari* and *manutara* (Figure 2).

This "treaty" plays a pivotal role in establishing, or at least interpreting, the temporal sequence of *rongorongo* in Easter Island artistic motifs. Fischer asserts that the treaty was probably the islanders' first exposure to speech embodied in written form and that "they adopted a method of script

that employed motifs they had already been using in their rich rock art" (Bahn, 1996). Whether this truly represents the first use of *rongorongo* on Easter Island or not, its apparent absence (at least until 1864) does support the theory that the script post-dates European contact. In his *Glyphbreaker* (1997), Fischer aptly asks why the Rapanui people would have even *needed* a script. "No Polynesian", he writes, "– indeed none of the three-million-odd inhabitants of Oceania in the eighteenth century – needed a writing system". The answer, Fischer concludes, lies in foreign intrusion. "The idea of writing was introduced to the Rapanui by outsiders who possessed writing".

Taking the matter further, Fischer [cited in Flenley and Bahn] also asks, "if the script already existed, why didn't the chiefs and priests not use more of

its motifs on the Spanish document?" An interesting question, to be sure, but, since we don't know what the "signatures" actually mean – or what they meant at the time (if they meant anything; Englert asserted that the islanders had no notion of what they were being asked to do) – why would we necessarily expect the chiefs to use more or less of a particular set of symbols? Perhaps, given the sacred nature of the symbols (as attested by their prominence at 'Orongo, for example), a "treaty" was not the appropriate place to use them? Perhaps for the same reason that *rongorongo* tablets were once *tapu*, use of related symbolism might have been restricted also (especially in the presence of outsiders, or *tangata hiva*, such as the Spaniards who were claiming the island in the name of Charles III).

In more direct terms, Lee observes that there may be evidence of some antiquity for the script because the "the

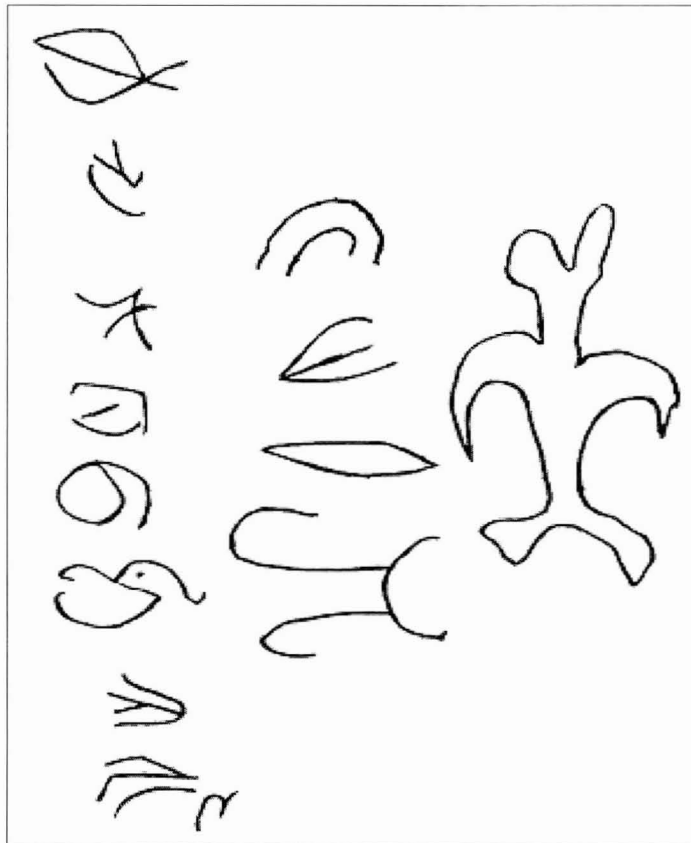


Figure 2. "Signatures" on the 1770 Spanish Treaty of Annexation [Harrison, 1874; cited in Fischer, 1997].

same motifs in the rock art are paralleled in *rongorongo* boards, as well as the numerous legends that deal with these ‘talking boards’.

Regardless of the antiquity of *rongorongo*, it’s important to acknowledge that, even if it did emerge as a result of exposure to European writing, the underlying cultural and artistic symbolism was not likely to have been completely invented from scratch. As Polynesians, the early Easter Islanders brought with them many of the cultural attributes of their ancestors. The term “*rongorongo*” did not exist on Easter Island prior to the 1870s, but it is believed to have been brought from Mangareva by people who returned to Easter Island after abandoning the Catholic mission there. This is supported by the fact that, in Mangareva, the Rongorongo was a class of high-ranking experts charged with the memory and recitation of sacred chants. In his *Polynesian Mythology*, George Grey describes a woman named Rongo-Rongo, the wife of Turi, whose son is killed. Rongo-Rongo reports a chant about the death. Similarly, on Ra’ivavae, carved wooden tablets of aligned glyphs are known as *taparakau*. They were up to 6-feet (2-meters) long, 2-feet (0.6 meters) wide, fastened over the doors of houses of priests, and incised in rows with patterns of symbols (*hōhō*) used as models for tattooing or decorating persons of high rank; moreover, these tablets enjoyed great veneration, containing historical events recited by priests; many of the symbols are supposed to represent great gods and bird-men, sexual themes, etc., and to be taboo.

There is precedent on Easter Island itself for this kind of historico-linguistic phenomenon. The string-figure “game” known as *kai-kai* consists of making various figures with a loop of string held between the two hands. On Easter Island the figures are extremely complicated, and they were apparently used as mnemonic devices – to call to mind some event or some exact image. While the figure was being assembled in the hands, the player chants ritual words associated with the figure. It is not really a game but a form of memory-training, possibly a preparation for learning the *rongorongo* itself and thus conferred honor on those who came into contact with it. Similarly, the walking stick or staff carved with *rongorongo* script and now in the Natural History Museum in Santiago may have served as a chanting tool; similar to staves with notches used on Mangareva and in the Marquesas, the notches served as memory aids.

It is likely, therefore, that the concept came to Easter Island with its first settlers, regardless of whether the script did. In short, *rongorongo* and its derivatives are definite parts of the languages of Polynesia (though they don’t always have anything to do with Easter Island’s *rongorongo*; the Marquesan counterpart is derived from the word *rorongo*, not *rongorongo*. But I digress...).

There are other connections between *rongorongo*, memories, and the “homeland” as well. Barthel (1958) observed what he believed to be depictions of breadfruit on

rongorongo tablets, but there’s no evidence that breadfruit ever grew on Easter Island. It’s possible that knowledge or recollection of food plants existed before *rongorongo* was ever created (according to legend, breadfruit was brought to the island by Hotu Matu’a but did not survive) and this is why they appear in the script. In like fashion, Flenley and Bahn report that islanders reacted to dogs with fright, suggesting they had never seen them before. However, islanders gave cats the name *kuri*, which is the Polynesian word for “dog” – suggesting some memory of the canine presence remained.

In an article on the Chilean wine palm (*Jubaea chilensis*), Juan Grau observes the similarity between a *rongorongo* glyph on the “Mamari” tablet and the robust characteristics of the palm (Figure 3). While, technically, the Chilean wine palm is not the same species as the Easter Island palm⁶, the possible similarity between the Chilean and Easter Island palms, and the appearance of a palm as a *rongorongo* glyph, attests to the islanders’ inclination to depict important physical elements as symbols, even if those elements were no longer present or derived only from memory.

Since we cannot date the petroglyphs on Easter Island with any precision – to begin with, it’s notoriously difficult, and especially so where the art is relatively young, as it is on

Easter Island (a mere 1,400 years) – whether *rongorongo* preceded the rock art or vice versa is not particularly relevant here. What we can do is compare the glyphs and rock art, side by side, and draw our own conclusions. Thus, I submit the following – using Fischer (1997) and Lee (1992) as sources – to posit a discernable concordance between *rongorongo* glyphs and Easter Island rock art. Obviously the ability to recognize similarities may represent subjective interpretations, but I think even the few samples here should be quite convincing (Table 1).

Whatever *rongorongo* was – a script, mnemonic symbols, a first attempt to emulate European writing systems, etc. – and whatever it meant to the ancient Rapanui may never be fully understood. But I think we can at least agree with Fischer who concludes that “*rongorongo* was conceived, born, and nurtured among the rich inventory of Easter Island’s...rock art”. This paper barely scratches the surface (no pun intended) of the discussion on both parallels between Easter Island art forms and how one of its most fascinating and enduring mysteries can stand on its own as another in a delightful series of art forms created by the remarkable people of Easter Island. Some might say, and accurately so, that, with the relative dearth of information available on *rongorongo*, we have nowhere to go in our study of it. But since *rongorongo* can be more than what it meant as a script (as I hope, modestly, this paper establishes), I’d say the future of *rongorongo* is not what it used to be.

[see page 94 for footnotes and references]

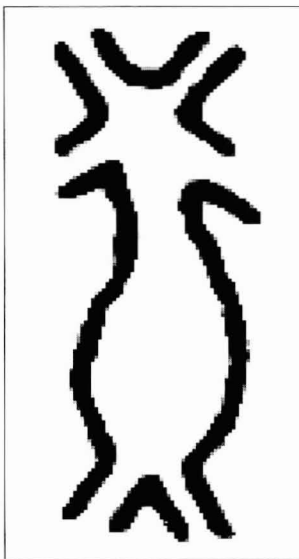


Figure 3. “Niu” palm tree glyph from “Mamari” *rongorongo* tablet (RR 2a13) (Fischer, 1997).

Table 1. A comparison of some *rongorongo* glyphs and similar petroglyphs.









































	<i>image</i>	<i>source</i> (Fischer, 1997) *	<i>rongorongo glyph</i>	<i>petroglyph</i>	<i>source</i> (Lee, 1992)
1	manutara	Échanerée RR 3a3 p. 420			Rano Raraku ** Fig. 3.8:3 p. 37
2	Makemake eye face mask	Santiago Staff RR 10-1 (BI 12) p. 451			Orongo Fig. 5.3:3 p. 135
3	fish	Lg. St. Petersburg RR 18v1 p. 481			Ava o Kiri Fig. 3.9:1 p. 38
4	tangata manu	Lg. Santiago RR 9r2 p. 445			Orongo Fig. 5.23 p. 150
5	anthropomorphic sea creature	Lg. St. Petersburg RR 18v1 p. 481			Ava o Kiri Fig. 4.76 p. 91
6	rei miro	Keiti RR 6r4 p. 433			Hanga Piko Fig. 3.11:1 p. 40
7	rapa	London Rei Miro RR 20 [2] p. 491			Orongo *** Fig. 3.11:4 p. 40
8	lizard man (or anthropo- morph with phallus)	Santiago Staff RR 10-1 (BI 11) p. 454			Ahu Nau Nau Fig. 3.5:1 p. 34
9	komari	Santiago Staff RR 10-1 (BI 12) p. 451			Orongo Fig. 3.6:8 p. 35
10	moon (crescent)	Mamari RR 2a5 p. 413			Ava o Kiri Fig. 3.14:10 p. 43
11	abstract figure	Aruku RR 4r4 p. 424			Anakena Fig. 4.135 p. 128

Table 1. continued.

	<i>image</i>	<i>source</i> (Fischer, 1997) *	<i>rongorongo glyph</i>	<i>petroglyph</i>	<i>source</i> (Lee, 1992)
12	fishhook	Mamari RR 2b14 p. 416			Papa Vaka Fig. 3.13:1 p. 42
13	parallel wavy lines	Aruku RR 4r9 p. 424			Vai Atare Fig. 3.14:4 p. 43
14	spread-eagle figure	Keiti RR 6r8 p. 433			Tongariki Fig. 4.134 p. 127
15	two-headed frigate bird	Sm. Washington RR 15b8 p. 468			Akahanga Fig. 3.8:4 p. 37
16	anthropomorphic figure with pointed head (or hat)	Aruku RR 4v9 p. 426			Poike Fig. 4.14:1 p. 54
17	turtle	Lg. Vienna RR 24a3 p. 503			Tongariki Fig. 3.9:9 p. 38
18	lozenge-headed figure	Tahua RR 1a1 p. 405			Hanga Piko Fig. 3.5:2 p. 34
19	plant	Sm. Santiago RR 8v2 p. 441			Hanga Piko Fig. 4.125 p. 121
20	plant	Mamari RR 2a14 p. 414			Hanga Piko Fig. 4.126 p. 121

Note: Some images have been rotated to better accommodate their placement in the table.

* tablet, unless otherwise specified

** similar rock art can be found on Motu Nui and at Orongo

*** inside the houses

FOOTNOTES

- ¹ This artifact is often used to bolster the theory that *rongorongo* is indeed from the 19th century. However, an older script could certainly have been carved on newer wood.
- ² There were two post-*rongorongo* inventions on the island: the *tā'u* (*tā* means "writing"), elaborated as an imitation *rongorongo* in the 1880s and 90s in order to increase the value of carved artifacts on which it was incised; and the *mama*, a geometric decoration (or alphabetic substitution) that was created in the first half of the twentieth century and also used to adorn artifacts for trade.
- ³ Eyraud's reports describing the creation of *rongorongo* tablets in 1864 disprove one of the scholarly myths surrounding the script – namely that not all learned men on the island were removed during the Peruvian slave raids or died in their wake.
- ⁴ Two of the four items in the Museo Antropológico Padre Sebastián are genuine – one in stone, the other (shaped like a fish) in wood – but the two wood tablets are replicas.
- ⁵ We don't usually see the individual frames of a motion picture – but artistic, cinematic achievements such as Martin Scorsese's *Raging Bull* or Werner Herzog's *Aguirre: The Wrath of God* can be appreciated either way; and, indeed, our ability to analyze and appreciate the works relies on both.
- ⁶ The extinct species in question is actually *Paschalococos dispersa*, named by John Dransfield of the Royal Botanic Gardens at Kew, England, to deliberately distinguish it from *Jubaea chilensis* (Dransfield, personal communication, 2003).

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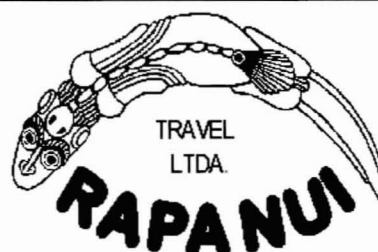
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